

# How to Be a Berserker

by Constantinus

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Summary: Pre-films. Like all skilled craftsmen, Dagur the Deranged takes time to practice his chosen vocation. By reader request.

Warning: contains bullying.

## 1. Chapter 1

**\*\*A/N:** This story was originally requested by a reader for my one-shot series, Random Words of Wisdom. However, I found the subject matter so compelling it merited its own place as an independent piece. Many thanks, Yondaime Namikaze: this story is dedicated to you, and I hope I've done it justice. **\*\***

**\*\*Disclaimer:** How to Train Your Dragon and all related characters and events belong to Cressida Cowell and DreamWorks Animation. **\*\***

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><p>Day 1<p>

The Berserker tribe boasted a proud and bloody history of war: war on dragons, war on their neighbors, and when driven to it in times of extreme domestic boredom, war on each other. Berserkers were fierce and unrelenting, their tempers as sharp as their swords and skulls as thick as their shields. For many long years, they had held their heads high as the terrors of the archipelago, a title they were loathe to relinquish.

At least, so the sages said.

But Oswald the Agreeable, drinker of tea, tender of gardens, and lord of the tribe, was supremely uncomfortable with the war-like image. He was a friendly sort, was Oswald: he signed treaties with neighboring chiefs, held the door for little old ladies, and generally made himself as pleasant as possible. He was, in short, a most exemplary chief and a most unconventional Berserker.

Under Oswald's leadership the Berserker tribe enjoyed peace, prosperity, and a measure of tranquil accord unheard of in their long and sordid history. All was well, and all were happy.

All, that is, except Dagur the Deranged (as he called himself), cracker of skulls, slayer of beasts, and heir apparent to the chief. Dagur was a traditionalist, in the worst sense of the word. Dagur liked mayhem and enjoyed his tribe's savage history: he picked fights as a little boy, started brawls as an older boy, and generally made himself as blood-thirsty and violent as possible. Dagur was, in short, a Berserker in much more than name.

Which was part of the reason why annual treaty-signings in Berk could be rather uncomfortable affairs for the two chiefs involved.

But whatever the adults felt about those momentous occasions, Dagur liked them. A three-day trip to Berk meant wonderful opportunities to torture other teens, one of Dagur's favorite hobbies. With any luck at all, this would be a very profitable visit.

As their sturdy and unpretentious little ship docked in Berk's harbor, a smile of maniacal joy broke over the Deranged's face: Hiccup and his little band of friends were waiting for him.

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><p>"Fishlegs," Dagur inquired, his voice dripping innocent interest, "what is this thing?"<p>

The two of them were exploring the armory while the grown-ups talked about boring grown-up things like trade, crop exports, fish levels in the fjords, and whether or not the Outcasts would cause trouble again. Fishlegs fancied himself an excellent tour guide: despite his squeaky voice and lack of confidence as a fighter, his passionate love and diligent study of all things related to dragons and killing dragons made him a formidable fountain of knowledge. He'd practically leaped at the chance to give Dagur the official tour.

He enjoyed pointing out the gruesome blood-stains on the larger axes, the not insignificant bite marks on the shields, and the scorches and burn marks on just about everything. But the dragon traps were his favorite, and he was just beginning to explain how they worked.

He wandered back to where Dagur stood inspecting a large iron cage, its bars grey with dust, its door swung wide.

"Oh, that? Long ago, the Vikings on this island used cages for dragons they caught alive, keeping them for practice and training. My grandfather told me once that there was a Gronckle who stayed alive in this cage for forty years, until it died of old age. That was before they built the arena, of course. This cage hasn't been used for years."

"Old age? He probably died of boredom."

Fishlegs made to walk away, but Dagur grabbed his arm and tugged him back.

"What's that?" Dagur asked, pointing at something hidden in the

shadows at the back end of the cage.

"That? Uh...it might be a pile of old dragon dung," Fishlegs answered. He didn't actually know what it was, but it was related to dragons and therefore worthy of interest.

"Or, it might be some of the Gronckle's bones, or a cool dragon-killing thing!" Dagur exclaimed, unable to contain his excitement. "Let's go look!"

"Um...okay, if you really want to."

Dagur stepped over the iron bar of the door-frame and strode boldly toward the dark shapeless mass, Fishlegs following behind him.

"Ugh," Dagur huffed in frustration when they reached it, "it's just a pile of moldy old furs."

"Thank Thor for that," Fishlegs squeaked. It was dark at that end of the cage, and dragon bones or no dragon bones, dark places made him nervous. "There might have been something hiding under them. Like mice...or spiders.

"You know what I think, Fishlegs?" Dagur asked, picking up one of the furs and shaking it experimentally. A cloud of dust rose from it and Fishlegs sneezed violently.

"What?" he asked, wiping his nose with the back of a hand.

"These aren't just furs."

"They're not?" Fishlegs' eyes were watering.

"Oh no," Dagur replied, his tone serious and conspiratorial. "These are valuable resources, quite useful in making dragon bait."

"Dragon bait?" Fishlegs perked up his ears, suddenly intrigued. "What kind of dragons would it attract? And how do you make it? Is it hard?"

"Couldn't be simpler: you just wrap it around a large object - say, a barrel or an overgrown Viking - so that it looks like a wild animal, then leave it in the cage until a dragon comes to eat it. Like so." Dagur threw the fur over Fishlegs' head and bolted, slamming the cage-door and locking it behind him.

"Hey, Dagur, what are you doing? Help me get this thing off!" Fishlegs' voice came out muffled as he struggled with the mangy shroud.

Dagur turned, light from outside glinting off his helmet. "You just sit tight, Fishlegs, until the dragons come. This is lesson number one in How to Be a Berserker: keep it simple!" he shouted, then left.

Fishlegs, having finally pulled the nasty fur off his head, watched the Deranged vanish through the door of the armory, his maniacal laughter echoing in the crowded space. He sat down then, fully aware that it could be some time before Dagur returned. He scratched his

head thoughtfully for a moment.

"Should've seen that one coming," he muttered philosophically, and settled in for what could be a very long wait.

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><p>Dagur swaggered through the village square, hands planted on hips and lips pursed in a very self-satisfied smirk. Day one of the official visit had already gotten off to a good start. His eyes lit up in anticipation as he spotted Hiccup leaving one of the buildings on the edge of the cliff.<p>

"Hiccup, old friend," Dagur called, his voice and gestures conveying amiable friendliness.

Hiccup approached reluctantly and Dagur clapped a hand on his shoulder as they walked toward the Great Hall.

"You know, Hiccup," Dagur said lightly, "in the past I've visited and we've spoken on one or two occasions, but I feel that we haven't really gotten to know each other properly. I come back to Berk every year and barely remember you."

"Really?" Hiccup responded, subtly attempting to shrug the hand off, "because I would've said that you're pretty unforgettable, Dagur."

"Oh, you flatter me. But, honestly, someday I'll be chief of the Berserkers and you'll be...well, maybe we shouldn't talk about that. We could be allies someday, so for the sake of the future, let us use the present wisely. What do you like to do for fun, Hiccup?"

The other boy looked at him suspiciously, green eyes wide with veiled surprise and mistrust.

"Do you like fishing?" he finally asked.

"Fishing? I was thinking more along the lines of hunting or dragon-killing, but if fishing is what you want, Hiccup, then fishing is what we'll do." Dagur's smile overflowed with friendly sincerity.

Hiccup scratched his head, trying to think of a reasonable excuse, then gave up. "Okay then, I...guess I'll see you tomorrow."

The Deranged only smiled wider. "It would be my pleasure."

## 2. Chapter 2

### Day 2

It was unusually warm that summer, warm enough that the waves lapping on the shore had abandoned their normal numbing cold in favor of a mere temperate coolness. Hiccup and Dagur sat on the dock, fishing rods baited and strung over the water, bare toes splashing a little. It was early still, and quiet, the calls of seabirds and murmur of waves the only sounds. They sat there, not saying much, Hiccup intent on his fishing.

Dagur was beginning to grow restless. He waved his borrowed fishing rod aimlessly and kicked his legs, ripples spreading under his feet. Hiccup took no notice.

"Do you ever do anything fun, Hiccup?" he asked.

"I thought you asked me that question yesterday," Hiccup replied evenly. "And I suggested fishing. Is there a problem?"

"Problem? Boring!" Dagur gave the fishing rod a particularly savage jerk and nearly poked Hiccup in the eye.

Hiccup threw his head back and blinked in surprise, but held his rod steady and remained silent. There didn't seem to be a good answer to Dagur's assessment of the situation.

Finally, Dagur could stand it no longer. He hopped up, throwing the rod down on the dock and stamping his foot emphatically. "Are you just going to sit there all day and bore me to death?" he demanded, eyes narrowed and teeth bared.

Hiccup looked up warily. "Well, what would you like to do, Dagur?" he asked, carefully pulling in the line and winding it around his rod.

In response, Dagur merely shoved the smaller boy into the water with a loud splash. Hiccup came up spluttering, hands pulling at the heavy fur vest that was already dragging him under.

"Why would you do that?" he gasped in a shocked voice.

Dagur dropped his helmet with a \_thunk\_, and jumped in, sending another wave over Hiccup's head. "Fishing is boring, so we're swimming now," he stated matter-of-factly when he resurfaced.

"Swimming, huh?" Hiccup pushed sopping wet hair out of his eyes. "Because, I don't think this was part of the plan."

"Come on, Hiccup! I never make plans; I prefer to be spontaneous." Dagur thumbed his nose proudly, splashing Hiccup in the process.

"Well...if this is your idea of spontaneity," Hiccup gasped, out of breath, "I think I'd prefer a little warning; you know...beforehand."

"Are you still in grammar school, Hiccup? Does your dad still tuck you in at night? Don't be such a baby!"

Hiccup frowned, blinking against the water dripping into his eyes and reaching up to grab the edge of the dock. "Well, not that this hasn't been fun, but I have things to do, Dagur."

He made to pull himself out of the water, but his skinny arms gave way before he could get his legs up. His hands slipped off the damp wood, and with a cry of consternation, he fell back in.

Dagur chuckled slyly from where he floated. "Do it again, Hiccup!"

That was funny."

Hiccup's frown deepened and he tried again. Again, he was unsuccessful and plopped back in with a weak splash. Twice more he tried, always with the same result.

"You know, Hiccup," Dagur observed lightly, "I take it back: you're not boring after all. In fact, I'm actually enjoying this."

"Glad somebody is," Hiccup muttered. His arms, never strong to begin with, were beginning to shake with the combined effort of keeping himself afloat and attempting to clamber onto the dock. When he raised them again, he found he couldn't even get a proper grip on the wood. He huffed in frustration, blowing droplets off the tip of his nose.

"Um, Dagur, could you - er, could I get a little help here?" he asked through gritted teeth.

"Well that is a question now, isn't it?" Dagur responded, casually pulling himself onto the dock in one fluid motion. He knelt, dripping, and peered over the edge at Hiccup. "Because, as fun as this whole swimming thing is, it could be a lot funnier."

"Oh, yeah? How's that?"

"Like this!" He jumped, tucking his legs up into a ball and hitting the water with a loud \_thwack\_. The impact sent a tidal wave over Hiccup's head and he came up spluttering.

"Dagur, this is getting old!" Hiccup cried when the other boy resurfaced.

"On the contrary, Hiccup, swimming is an excellent activity for young people like us," Dagur replied, bellowing with laughter and windmilling his arms in a barrage of water directed at Hiccup's face.

Hiccup coughed and spluttered, choking on the waves and unable to avoid them. "Dag- Dagur...stop! Please, you're gonna' drown me!" he gasped, desperately trying to get away and keep his head above water.

Abruptly, Dagur's mood shifted. "Ugh, Hiccup, you're being boring again. That's all you Berkians ever do: you spoil other people's fun and sit around being boring."

He pulled himself back up onto the dock with a disgruntled scowl, wringing the water out of his tunic and retrieving his helmet as he prepared to leave. Behind him, Hiccup floundered in the water, trying and failing miserably to get onto the dock. Hearing the other boy's cries, Dagur turned, his face once again lighting up.

"On the other hand, you should thank me, Hiccup," he said, addressing the bedraggled figure in the water. "You've just learned lesson number two: keep it fun!"

With that, he strode away, a very Deranged grin crinkling his eyes and tugging the corners of his mouth upwards.

Hiccup splashed feebly in the water, his faint cries a pathetic testament to his swimming prowess.

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><p>As Dagur climbed the hill toward the Great Hall, he had the great good fortune of encountering another teenager along the way. His grin spread even wider.<p>

"Astrid!" he cried jovially, attempting to put his arm around the pretty Viking's slender waist. "I was thinking of doing some knife-throwing practice. Would you care to join me?"

Astrid calmly removed his arm and stepped back two paces, crossing her arms.

"The knife isn't really my preferred weapon, Dagur. I'm much better at axe-throwing." She spun her axe as she spoke, its gleam dancing over her face.

"All the more reason for you to join me." Dagur put on his most debonair manner. "Come along, Astrid, what better way to spend an afternoon than improving a useful skill and enjoying my company?"

"I could spend it watching Ruff and Tuff argue," she retorted sharply.

"What a laugh you are, sister," Dagur chuckled. "But be honest: you really don't mean that, do you?"

Astrid rolled her eyes in blatant contradiction. She would have liked to refuse his request outright, but for the chief's injunction to all the teens to keep Dagur amused and occupied.

"All right then," she acquiesced reluctantly. "When and where?"

"Hmm, shall we say tomorrow? In the field next to the armory?"

"Very well. You bring the knives."

"With pleasure. Until tomorrow then." The Deranged chuckled inwardly, his nose crinkling in wicked delight. This trip was turning out to be very profitable indeed.

### 3. Chapter 3

#### Day 3

Fishlegs sat in the dragon cage, his stomach growling and his face the picture of patient suffering. He'd been in that cage for Thor only knew how long, trying the lock, testing every bar for possible loose sockets, calling for help, and throwing various small items at the door in an attempt to knock it open. When every attempt failed, he sat on the floor, idly drawing patterns in the dust and trying not to feel sorry for himself.

He was a Viking, and Vikings are supposed to be tough and not whine or cry about being stuck in awkward or uncomfortable situations. Of

course, a really good Viking would be smart enough to avoid the awkward and uncomfortable situation to begin with. And Fishlegs had always considered himself smart.

He sighed, once again hoping someone would finally notice his absence and come looking for him.

It was not to be; several hours later, the door banged open and Dagur strode in, a large basket slung over his shoulder.

"Fishlegs, my boy, how are you?" he asked, his voice lightly colored with friendly interest.

"Hungry," Fishlegs replied, standing and eyeing the basket. "Could you let me out now? Please?"

Dagur set the basket down next to the cage. "I could think about it," he said evenly. "Here," he continued, opening the basket, "why don't you eat up some of these while I decide whether to let you out or not."

Fishlegs approached, sniffing cautiously. "Eww," he exclaimed when he saw the basket's contents. "Dagur, those are cod-heads, and based on the smell, I'm pretty sure they're rotten. I can't eat those; I'll get sick."

Dagur crossed his arms and his eyes narrowed. "I could leave you in here a few more days and you'll never have to worry about getting sick again," he said menacingly.

Fishlegs raised his hands placatingly and took a step back, forgetting the bars that stood between them. "No, wait, let's just talk this through...um, we never did finish your tour of the village, did we? There are still a lot of sights to see. I could show you...uh the arena, and the granary, and the smithy, and themillandthesheepfoldsand -"

Dagur silenced his babble with a curt gesture. "Boring! Now you eat up like a good boy and maybe I'll let you out."

Fishlegs giggled nervously, his voice squeaking and one hand covering his mouth. "How many do I have to...eat...before you'll let me out?"

Dagur crossed his arms again and drummed his fingers impatiently. "You eat until I decide you've had enough."

"That many, huh?"

"The longer you wait, the longer it's gonna' take me to decide."

Fishlegs scooted forward, reaching through the bars and gingerly lifting a fish-head out of the basket. "You sure you won't change your mind?" he asked, pausing hopefully.

Dagur rolled his eyes. "Still waiting."

Fishlegs sniffed mournfully, then plugging his nose, shoved the whole disgusting fish-head into his mouth. It was slimy, sliding past his



tongue and down his throat before he even had a chance to chew. He shuddered involuntarily and blinked his eyes rapidly.

"Now will you let me out?" he asked hopefully.

Dagur shook his head slowly, and Fishlegs sadly dipped his hand back into the basket.

The second fish-head was larger than the first, and required the use of his teeth. Fishlegs forced it down and blinked away tears of revulsion, giving Dagur what he hoped was a sufficiently pathetic and hopeful look. The Deranged merely shook his head, indicating that more suffering was necessary.

On and on it went, fish-head after fish-head, until the basket was half empty and Fishlegs looked decidedly green about the gills. "Unngghh," he groaned, clutching his stomach, "I don't feel so good; and I can't eat any more, Dagur, you can't make me."

"Well," Dagur said as he pulled the bolt-pin off the cage door, "at least you're no longer hungry."

Fishlegs tottered out of the cage, leaning on the bars for support and moaning feebly. "I think I'm never gonna' be hungry again," he whimpered.

"Ah, but you see, Fishlegs, today you've learned another valuable lesson."

"What lesson?"

Dagur tapped his nose conspiratorially and patted the other boy on the back. "Lesson number three: keep it snappy."

Fishlegs tottered outside and promptly retched in the grass. "I'm really beginning to question your teaching methods." He stood up, wiping his mouth miserably, and then noticed the others.

Astrid was standing in the field, her face dark with anger. Snotlout stood just behind her, laughing with undisguised amusement at Fishlegs' unhappiness. And Hiccup was there too, looking distinctly uncomfortable with the whole situation. Fishlegs moaned in mortification, and tottered away, desperate to escape Dagur's continued attentions.

Dagur dropped the basket and swaggered into the field, hands on hips and smirk firmly in place. Hiccup backed away ever so slightly while Astrid glared and Snotlout clapped a hand on Dagur's shoulder. The Deranged shrugged him off and addressed Astrid.

"Who's this?" he asked casually.

"That's Snotlout," Astrid replied, her face still angry, "he insisted on coming. And what were you doing to Fishlegs?"

"Oh, just a few friendly survival tips," Dagur answered airily. "I brought the knives, so shall we begin?"

"Hey, um, Dagur," Snotlout interjected, "don't we need to set up a target first?"

"Do I look stupid? Of course we need a target! But I thought we'd make things more interesting today and use a moving target."

Snotlout's jaw dropped and Astrid narrowed her eyes. "Oh, perfect," Hiccup muttered.

"And what did you have in mind, Dagur?" she asked with just enough menace in her tone.

Dagur grinned. "We're going to use Hiccup as a target."

Snotlout burst into peals of raucous laughter and Astrid stiffened. Hiccup backed away even faster, his voice rising.

"Now look, Dagur, we're all friends here, right? I mean, there's no reason for this, is there?"

Dagur hefted a curved blade and tested its sharpness. "Better start running, Hiccup," he warned, and sent the knife spinning through the air. It landed dangerously close to Hiccup's foot and he ran, Dagur giving chase.

"That's it," Astrid scolded, "I'm not sticking around for this. Snotlout, you should leave too. Or better yet, you could go and help."

"Sure, I'll help Dagur. You should stay, Astrid, this is gonna' be great."

She stormed away in exasperation at the stupidity of boys, and Snotlout went back to watching. Dagur was keeping Hiccup on his toes, knife after knife landing in uncomfortable proximity and forcing the smaller boy to keep running. The chase wound up the hillside, over fences, around houses and piles of rock, through pastures full of sheep and yak, and finally to the brink of a cliff. Hiccup stopped suddenly, teetering a little on the edge, and turned to face his pursuer.

Dagur cackled in a most deranged manner and flourished his last knife. "Oh, yes, Hiccup! This is amazing, this is exactly how it's supposed to be! Lesson number four: keep it dangerous!"

Hiccup inched closer to the edge, his feet sending loose pebbles tumbling to the sea far below. He glanced behind him, then looked back at Dagur, his face pleading and hands raised in supplication.

"Dagur, don't do it! You'll regret it later."

"Oh, I won't regret it," Dagur said, taking careful aim. "And don't worry, Hiccup: you'll only feel it for a moment."

As he drew his hand back to throw, something hard and slimy collided with it, knocking the knife loose. Hiccup dropped to the ground, hands over his head, and Dagur turned around, a cry of surprise escaping his lips. Fishlegs was stumbling up the hill, carrying the basket and still looking green, his mouth set in a determined line. He thrust his hand back into the basket, withdrew another fish-head,

and threw, his aim sure and true.

The projectile hit Dagur's helmet with a wet smack and slid down to rest on his nose. Dagur roared with fury and made to charge his aggressor, but Fishlegs was faster, hurling fish-head after fish-head with an accuracy fueled by rare and unbridled anger.

"This...is the last time...you bully...people...in Berk!" he yelled between heads.

Now it was Dagur's turn to run. Overwhelmed and unable to defend himself or retaliate, he ran back down the hill, babbling incoherently. Fishlegs watched him go, smiling with grim satisfaction.

Hiccup stood carefully and approached the other boy, brushing himself off. "Thanks," he said simply.

Fishlegs closed the basket and slung it over his shoulder. "Somebody had to teach that guy a real lesson," he said.

Hiccup smiled, and the two of them made their way down the hill in companionable silence.

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><p>Dagur watched as the jagged outline of Berk receded in the distance, his eyes narrowed and lips turned downward in a dismal frown. Being a Berserker was a lot harder than the sages said, especially when everybody else was so interested in peace and rotten cod-heads. But the Deranged was nothing if not determined, holding to his purpose with lunatic resolution. Berk would hear from him again; Hiccup and his little friends would hear from him.<p>

The End

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><p><strong>AN: Dagur is my favorite villain in the HTTYD movieverse: he has a certain sophistication and appeal totally lacking in other antagonists such as Alvin, Mildew, or Drago. I hope you all enjoyed this little piece; it was a pleasure to write.\*\*

Viking Lady: Thanks for your reviews. In answer to your question about Oswald, in my head he's slightly elderly, having sired Dagur late in life, a bit absent-minded, and his relationship with his son tends toward intentional ignorance and denial that Dagur is a trouble-maker. Hence, he has no idea what Dagur gets up to most of the time.

End  
file.